CLAIMS

1. A system for enabling use of a computer terminal in a network to access or otherwise participate in at least one network-related function and voice communication over the network, comprising:

a telephone handset including a microphone, a speaker and a finger-image sensor, the handset being coupled to provide signals to and receive signals from the computer terminal for voice communication, and at least to provide signals to the computer terminal relating to a finger-image sensed by the finger-image sensor;

means for electronically authenticating a finger-image sensed by a finger-image sensor of a handset based on the finger-image-related signals provided by that handset;

means responsive to the authenticating means for enabling the computer terminal in the network to access or otherwise participate in the performance of at least one network-related function and voice communication over the network at least from each handset providing finger-image-related signals based upon which a sensed finger-image was authenticated.

2. The system of claim 1 wherein the enabling means enables voice communication to and from each handset providing finger-image-related signals based upon which a sensed finger-image was authenticated.

3. A system for voice communication between computer terminals in a network, comprising:

a plurality of computer terminals in the network;

a telephone handset, coupled to each of the plurality of computer terminals, including a microphone, a speaker and a finger-image sensor, the handset being coupled to provide signals to and receive signals from the computer terminal for voice communication, and at least to provide signals to the computer terminal relating to a finger-image sensed by the finger-image sensor;

means for electronically authenticating a finger-image sensed by a finger-image sensor of a handset based on the finger-image-related signals provided by that handset;

means responsive to the authenticating means for enabling the handset that provided finger-image-related signals based upon which a sensed finger-image was authenticated to participate in voice communications over the network.

4. The system of claim 1 or 3 wherein at least one of the computer terminals includes the means for authenticating.

5. The system of claim 1 or 3 comprising a computer in the network, other than the computer terminals, that include the means for authenticating.

6. The system of claim 1 or 3 wherein at least one of the computer terminals includes the means responsive to the authenticating means.

7. The system of claim 1 or 3 comprising a computer in the network, other than the computer terminals, that includes the means responsive to the authenticating means.

8. The system of claim 1 or 3 wherein the handset is keypadless and each computer terminal includes a computer input device by which information for accessing

or otherwise participating in voice communications over the network is input to the computer terminal.

9. A telephone handset for voice communication through a computer terminal and for biometric identification, comprising:

a microphone;

a speaker;

a finger-image sensor;

circuitry coupled to the microphone and speaker which at least converts between analog and digital signals; and

an interface coupling the finger-image sensor and the circuitry with the computer terminal.

10. The telephone handset of claim 9, wherein the interface comprises:

a first universal serial bus (USB) interface coupled to the integrated circuitry;

a second USB interface coupled to the finger-image sensor;

the interface coupling the finger-image sensor and the circuitry with the computer terminal comprising a USB hub coupled to the first and second USB interfaces.

11. The telephone handset of claim 10, comprising a cable coupled to the USB hub and connectable to a USB port of a computer terminal.

12. The telephone handset of claim 10, wherein the circuitry comprises a codec.

13. A telephone handset comprising:

an elongated housing having opposed major sides and opposed ends;

a speaker positioned in the vicinity of a first end of the handset to transmit sound from a first major side of the handset;

a microphone positioned in the vicinity of a second end of the handset to receive sound from a first major side of the handset;

a finger-image sensor positioned in the vicinity of and spaced from the second end of the handset to sense a finger-image from a second major side of the handset;

a contoured surface leading to the finger-image sensor to receive part of a human finger therein.

14. The telephone handset of claim 13, wherein the first major side is generally flat and does not have a keypad thereon.

15. The telephone handset of claim 13, comprising a button projecting from the first end of the handset coupled to or forming part of a hookswitch.

16. A telephone handset comprising:

an elongated housing having a first portion and a second portion projecting at an angle with respect to the first portion, the first portion being larger than the second portion;

the first portion having opposed major sides;

a speaker positioned in the vicinity of a first end of the first portion of the handset to transmit sound from a first major side of the handset;

a finger-image sensor positioned in the vicinity of and spaced from a second end of the handset to sense a finger-image from a second major side of the first portion of the handset;

the second portion of the handset having opposed major sides;

the first and second portions being connected in the vicinity of the second end of the first portion and a first end of the second portion, and the first major side of the first portion and a first major side of the second portion forming an internal obtuse angle;

a microphone positioned in the vicinity of a second end of the second portion of the handset to receive sound from the first major side thereof;

a contoured surface extending from the second end of the first portion leading to the finger-image sensor to receive part of a human finger therein.

17. The telephone handset of claim 16, wherein the first major sides of the first and second portions are flat or generally flat and do not have a keypad thereon.

18. The telephone handset of claim 16, comprising a button projecting from the first end of the handset coupled to or forming part of a hookswitch.

19. A telephone handset comprising:

an elongated housing having opposed major sides;

a speaker positioned in the vicinity of a first end of the handset to transmit sound from a first major side of the handset;

a microphone positioned in the vicinity of a second end of the handset to receive sound from a first major side of the handset;

a finger-image sensor positioned in the vicinity of and spaced from a second end of the handset to sense a finger-image from a second major side of the handset;

a bracket positioned in the upper part of the handset configured to receive and engage a projection from which the handset can be suspended;

the first major side of the handset having a straight portion or portions configured to contact a flat or generally flat surface when the handset is suspended by the bracket pressed against the flat or generally flat surface by a finger received in the finger-image sensor so as to stabley maintain the handset during sensing of the finger.

20. A telephone handset comprising:

an elongated housing having a first portion and a second portion projecting at an angle with respect to the first portion, the first portion being larger than the second portion;

the first portion having opposed major sides;

a speaker positioned in the vicinity of a first end of the first portion of the handset to transmit sound from a first major side thereof;

a finger-image sensor positioned in the vicinity of and spaced from a second end of the handset to sense a finger-image from a second major side of the first portion of the handset;

the second portion of the handset having opposed major sides;

the first and second portions being connected in the vicinity of the second end of the first portion and a first end of the second portion, the first major side of the first portion and a first major side of the second portion forming an internal obtuse angle;

a microphone positioned in the vicinity of a second end of the second portion of the handset to receive sound from the first major side thereof;

a bracket positioned in the upper part of the handset configured to receive and engage a projection from which the handset can be suspended;

the first major sides of the first and second portions of the handset each having a straight portion which contacts a flat or generally flat surface when the handset is suspended by the bracket pressed against the flat or generally flat surface by a finger received in the finger-image sensor to maintain the handset steady during sensing of the finger.